

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASS PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8701

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 16996

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ON CABINET RESHUFFLE

1. MET WITH PRIME MINISTER AGAIN DECEMBER 23 TO INQUIRE ABOUT STATUS CABINET RESHUFFLE. HE SAID THAT THAPPANA NGINN WAS FORCED OUT AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND DID NOT RESIGN AS REPORTED IN PRESS; HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT NGINN'S DEPARTURE WOULD CONSTITUTE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE CABINET. LONG BORET'S EFFORTS TO BROADEN THE POLITICAL BASE OF THE GOVERNMENT BY ASSOCIATING BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS WITH THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS IN THE CABINET HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. WHILE THE REPUBLICANS, AND PARTICULARLY THE DEMOCRATS, HAVE BECOME LESS CRITICAL OF LONG BORET'S POLICIES, NEITHER PARTY NEVERTHELESS WAS PREPARED TO SHARE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES BY JOINING CABINET. THE REPUBLICANS, HOWEVER, WILL REMAIN ASSOCIATED THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

2. SOK CHHONG, THE GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK, A RESPECTED AND HONEST OFFICIAL HAS AGAIN ASKED THE MARSHAL FOR PERMISSION TO RESIGN; HE HAS OFFERED TO REMAIN IN HIS PRESENT POSITION UNTIL THE END JANUARY TO ASSURE SMOOTH TRANSITION. THIS IS NOT THE GOVERNOR'S FIRST ATTEMPT TO LEAVE HIS POST; HE WANTS TIME OFF TO REST UP FROM YEARS OF HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES. THIS TIME IT LOOKS LIKE MARSHAL WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE HIM TO STAY ON. IN
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THAT EVENT, LONG BORET IS THINKING OF TOUCH KIM, A FORMER

GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK AND PRESENTLY RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL FOR ADMINISTRATION, AS SOK CHHONG'S REPLACEMENT.

3. RATHER THAN STRESSING NEW FACES IN NEXT CABINET, LONG BORET IS PLANNING TO EMPHASIZE PROGRAM, I.E., AUSTERITY, WHEN PRESENTING HIS GOVERNMENT AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE WILL GIVE ME HIS SPECIFIC THOUGHTS ON THIS SUBJECT AT END OF THE WEEK. HE INTENDS TO PUT FINISHING TOUCHES TO CABINET RESHUFFLE BEFORE JANUARY 19, DATE SET FOR THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY CONVENTION FOR SELECTION OF SECRETARY GENERAL. IN THIS WAY LONG BORET CLAIMS HE CANNOT BE CRITICIZED FOR BEING TOOL OF SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY.

4. WITH RESPECT TO THE MANEUVERING GOING ON FOR THE POSITION OF SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY, LONG BORET SAID THAT LONG NON WOULD PROBABLY END UP IN THAT POSITION, BUT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD "LITTLE BROTHER" BE INCLUDED IN AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION. HE AGREED WITH MY EVALUATION THAT EVEN IF YOU REMOVE THE ODOR OF THE SKUNK, TO THE OUTSIDER THE SKUNK STILL LOOKS WHAT HE IS, A SKUNK.
DEAN

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